

Christ Our Passover Lamb

1 Corinthians 5:7

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 21, 2019

If you would, go ahead and open your Bibles with me to the book of First Corinthians. That's the book we were in this morning. Please turn with me to First Corinthians. And as you're doing that, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we want to say a special welcome to you. We get a lot of visitors this time of year due to the Easter holiday and our children being up here on stage. They did a wonderful job, didn't they? You guys get all clappy when the kids get up here. You've been clapping ever since they came up. That's great. I love that. That's awesome. I'm going to have the children sing every morning before I preach. That way you guys are in a good mood. But if you're here for them, we want to say welcome to you. We're so privileged to have you.

Also, I want to mention that if you would like to know more about our church, as Jim just mentioned, we have a welcome packet in the lobby for you to look at, or you can go on our website - gracefellowshipchilliwack.com. It tells you all about our doctrine, our history and our vision as a church. You can get all the information you need there on the website. So, please take a look at that.

And if this is your first Sunday with us, we're doing things a little bit differently today. We're in the middle of a series on the book of Titus called the "How to Plant a Church" series because we are learning how church plants work. We are a church plant here at Grace Fellowship. We're a new work of the Lord. But this morning, in light of the Easter holiday, we want to take a break from that and take you in a different direction and look at the book of First Corinthians.

First Corinthians is the seventh book in the New Testament. If you look in the order of appearance, you'll see that there is Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, and then this book; First Corinthians. It's the seventh book in order, it's the second letter that Paul wrote. Many of you have heard the name Paul before. He was the most prolific author in the New Testament. He wrote more books than any other. And this is the second book that we see of his in the Bible.

And just to introduce our passage to you before I read from it, to get your mind around the topic, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Easter is defined as a holiday which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It says that the holiday has accumulated a great many tradition, some of which have little to do with the resurrection. But Easter is still held every year by millions of Christians throughout the world. And I'll say a little more about those traditions in a moment.

But before we do, I thought it might be good to talk about the history of Easter a little bit. Tell you a little bit about where the holiday tradition comes from. The Church has celebrated the resurrection since the beginning of time. You may know that, but we've always honoured the resurrection. Acts 20:7 says that the early church met on Sunday because that's the day when Jesus resurrected. It's different from the Jews. The Jews met on Saturday. That was their holiday because it was the last day of the week and the day in which the Lord told them to rest. But the

church meets on Sunday. We switched days with them because Sunday is when Jesus came back from the dead. That's the reason for that. So, Christians have celebrated this since the beginning. It's a very important event for us.

Sometime in the Fourth Century, the Roman emperor made it into a holiday. Some of you may know this, but in the Fourth Century, when Constantine became emperor of Rome, he made several changes to the empire, and one was the legalization of Christianity. Before then, it was illegal to become a Christian. You could be put in prison for that. You could be put to death, your bibles could be confiscated and burned. Your house could be seized by the empire. Constantine stopped all that.

And he called several major councils for the church to conduct church affairs. One of them was called the "Council of Nicaea" in AD 325 which passed the following edict. And it said this, it said, "Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the spring equinox (or the beginning of spring)." So, they said in the Fourth Century, Easter should be a spring holiday. Christmas happens in winter, it closes the calendar out for us. Easter comes in the spring because Jesus was crucified in the Passover, which was a springtime event. Passover, I believe, is going on right now in Israel as we speak. And so, we celebrate Easter at this time in honour of that. That's where the holiday comes from.

I might also mention that the word "Easter" has an unusual background because we don't know where it comes from. Some say it comes from the Norse word, *Eostre*, which means "new birth" or "springtime". And that could be the case. Others say it comes from an old German word, meaning "dawn" because Jesus resurrected at dawn. But either way, Easter has been celebrated in different ways by different people throughout the history of the world. As the encyclopedia put it, there's many different traditions for this holiday.

So, for instance, a lot of you grew up in homes that had an Easter bunny, right? That laid Easter eggs. I think that tradition comes from Europe sometime in the middle ages to symbolize the arrival of spring. I have an Easter tradition in my house where I mow over Easter eggs all throughout the year after hiding those things. You think if there are different colours, you could find out where they are. But my children are very wise, and I can't find them. Some countries don't have an Easter bunny. So, for instance, I believe in Germany, either they still do it or at one time, they had an Easter Fox. And in Australia, rabbits are considered to be pests. They don't like them very much. So, they have an Easter Bilby. A bilby is a small gray thing that looks like a cross between a mouse and a possum, but that's how they celebrate the holiday. In Australia, they have a "bilbies, not bunnies" campaign where they try to promote this. And they dress these things up like Easter bunnies. You can get a chocolate bilby. I come from a part of the world where they eat possum and I've heard they're not very good, but maybe a chocolate possum would be better. But that's one of the traditions in the world; an Easter Bilby.

There's other ones as well. This one's a little more serious. There's a Filipino tradition called "Semana Santa" or "Holy Week" where the Filipino people hang themselves on crosses and flog themselves in the streets. Some of you might've seen this in the news. It's a medieval tradition. It comes from the Middle Ages as well. But in the Philippines, every year on Easter weekend, people walk around carrying crosses and beating themselves with whips with the idea that Jesus

did this, so now we need to do it. He was beaten this way, so we need to be beaten this way if we would be saved.

Now, I bring all this up to ask you the question (and we could talk about other traditions that are out there), but why do we celebrate the Easter holiday? Why is it so important to us? And I don't mean the bunnies and the bilbies and the all that stuff. I mean the cross and the resurrection. Let me ask you like this, why don't we flog ourselves like they do in the Philippines? You got to hand it to those people, they're very serious about their religion, right? But we're serious about our religion, why don't we do that? Why do we celebrate it in a different way?

And to answer these questions, I want you to look at First Corinthians chapter 5 with me. It's a passage that Jim just read to us. I want to say a few words about it in a moment. But first I want to read this to you. First Corinthians 5:7-8. And if you look at the end of verse 7, it says this, Paul says, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

That sounds a little mysterious and we're going to talk about some of that unfamiliar terminology here in a moment. But this passage has been called the "Gospel in metaphor" because it tells us the Gospel with a metaphor, with a word picture. "For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed." It's also been called a bridge between the testaments because that's what it does. It puts the New Testament and Old Testament together. And it has been called the "Christian's cause for celebration". Because if you notice in verse 7, Paul goes straight from talking about a sacrifice to talking about a celebration in verse 8.

That's kind of strange if you think about it. He goes straight from talking about death to talking about a party. "Therefore let us celebrate the feast." And the reason we celebrate this - and this is implied here. The passage doesn't come right out and say it. But the reason we celebrate Jesus, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, is because He resurrected. The Passover Lamb didn't stay dead. The sacrifice didn't stay sacrificed, He rose from the grave. He walked out of the tomb.

And the idea is that we can walk out of it as well if we believe in Him and take hold of Him through faith. Death is a pretty sobering thing. It's not something we typically celebrate. But you can celebrate death if someone defeated it, amen? You can honour this event if He rose from the grave.

A missionary in Brazil was once trying to help his people cross a river that the locals called the "River of Death" because they thought it was poison. They thought if you touch the river, you would die. So, after testing it himself, this missionary put his foot in the water to show them it was safe, they wouldn't die. But they didn't believe him, they weren't convinced. And so, he waited in the water up to his knees and they still didn't believe him. They weren't going to get in the water. And finally, after a few attempts like that, this guy swam to the other side and back and that did the job. Then they believed him, and they got in the water.

Friends, that's what Jesus did for us. He swam "Death River" and back. He went to the other side of the grave to show us it's safe for us. We can do it too if we believe in Him. And that's why we celebrate this event. That's what Easter's all about.

I don't know where everybody's at on this today. I don't know what you're struggling with this morning, if you have anything to celebrate. But I want to tell you that whatever you're going through, Jesus can get you through it because He defeated death. And if He can defeat death, He can defeat anything, amen? If you feel like you don't have a reason to celebrate, if life has gotten you're beat down this morning and discouraged, you can defeat that because He resurrected.

Studies have shown (and maybe some of you can relate to this) that one of the worst fears people have today is the fear of death. It's one of the most discouraging things to them. They can't stand it. It drives them crazy. In fact, people are so afraid of death today that some people don't even talk about it. They won't go visit people who are dying in the hospital or in nursing homes. They won't hold a funeral anymore. They'll have their loved ones cremated so they won't have to look at a dead body. And I'm not saying there's anything wrong with cremation, but I would say as a Christian, there's something wrong with you being afraid of death because Jesus defeated it. He rose from the grave. And it's the silliest thing in the world for you to be afraid of it now.

Paul says in this passage that death is a celebration for Christians. It's a cause for rejoicing. The early Christians, they used to meet in tombs and cemeteries to remember this. I saw a cartoon this week in the newspaper of a man saying, "I don't know why we call it Good Friday because Jesus died on that day. That doesn't sound very good to me." And a friend of his replied, "Well, if you were supposed to die on the cross for your sins and someone died in your place, what would you call that?" The man said, "I would call it good." This is a good thing. Easter is a very good thing. Jesus swam "Death River" and back for us. He defeated death, which is what we're going to talk about this morning.

If you're taking notes in First Corinthians 5:7-8, I want you to see three points Paul makes about the Passover Lamb in this passage. That's our outline for today. It's very simple: three points about the Passover Lamb. And it all goes back to this. Someone had to die in order for you to be saved. The Passover had to be sacrificed and resurrected, and that's what Jesus did. Easter celebrates the resurrection, but the cross is tied into that, and this morning we're going to focus mostly on the cross and then we'll talk about the resurrection.

But we're going to do this with three points - the first one is this, there's the reason for the Passover Lamb. Paul starts off this passage by giving us a reason for the Passover Lamb. He begins by telling us why Jesus had to die in the first place. And I want to read a long portion of scripture with you, but I'm going to walk you through it. This is all the background for the passage. This is all the reason why Jesus had to die. So, it's kind of long, but just hang in there with me and I'll walk you through it. If you look in verse 1, Paul writes and he says,

1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. 3 For I, on my part, though absent in body but

present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. (And here's the reason for all this) For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

Just to walk you through this a little bit. If you've read first Corinthians before, you'll know it was a book full of problems. The church in Corinth was just a mess. If you ever think your church is in bad shape or struggling, just read this book and you'll be encouraged. And this was probably the worst book in the New Testament, which is saying quite a bit. Just one problem right after another and this is one of the worst. This is really bad. Verse 1 says, "It's actually reported that there is immorality among you and of such a kind as this that someone has his father's wife." That phrase "it is reported" is interesting because it means word has leaked out. Paul says, "I wasn't looking for this, I wasn't asking around about this. I'm somewhere else at the time, and word has reached me that there is a man in your church who is sleeping with his father's wife."

Now, whether his father was still living at the time, we don't know. And whether this was his biological mother, we don't know. You can kind of read between the lines here and tell this woman was probably not part of the church because Paul does not address her. But nevertheless, the man was. He was a member of the church.

And Paul says, it's so bad in verse 2 that the Corinthians were arrogant about it. They were boasting in it, because it showed they were tolerant. Does that sound kind of familiar? They were open minded and accepting of all peoples. You see that on some church billboards today? I often think, man, if I went in that church and started spitting on people, I don't think everybody would accept me. I think they would throw me out. But this guy was in a sense spitting on the church.

So, Paul says in verse 2, "Remove this guy from your midst." He says in verse 5, "Deliver him over to Satan, throw him out of the church." And in verse 6, he says something interesting. He says, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" That's equivalent to our saying, "A rotten apple spoils a whole bunch. Or a little cancer kills the whole body." Because in ancient times, when they baked bread, they would take a small lump of dough and set it aside and put it in water to let it ferment. Then they would put that wet lump of dough back into a new lump of dough to make it rise, to make it light and fluffy. It was part of the baking process. They called it a little leaven, just a harmless little lump of dough. But it wasn't so harmless because if you weren't careful, that little lump could become infected due to the fermentation. It could spread disease to the whole lump of dough making you sick. And Paul says, "That's what this is doing in the church in Corinth. It's making people sick. The evil that this man is doing is making all of you evil minded."

And he says in verse 7, he says, "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump just as you are in fact unleavened." That's helpful because Paul says, "You are unleavened, you are

saved. The disease of sin has been taken away from you, but you need to act like it now. You need to clean out the sin from among you.”

And here's why - this is the reason I'm giving you this background. Verse 7, here's why: “For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed.” The word “for” there, it's a preposition that indicates reason or purpose. “This is the reason you need to get this guy out. This is the purpose for you taking this action, for Christ has been sacrificed.”

I don't think I have to tell you this because you guys know this already. You live in the real world, you don't live in a cave. But there's nothing more common in the church today than sin, is there? I mean, come on, we all brought our sin with us, right? But sin is everywhere in the church. Infection and disease are everywhere. And it's for this reason we forgot who died for us. We forgot the Passover Lamb. We can talk about other reasons, we could mention how evil society is, and how bad the culture is. And we can talk about the changes in the western world and how things are going down the tubes, and we're becoming more like the Romans and all this kind of stuff, which is probably true. But let's be honest, that's not the real problem. The real problem is we have forgotten the one who died for us. We have forgotten what our sins cost Him.

I played tennis in college and my teammates were all international. And many of them came from non-Christian countries and you stick these people from non-Christian countries in the Bible belt of the States and you had some interesting conversations. And I remember one of them asking me one time, “Jeremy, why do Christians drink so much?” He said, “That's weird to me.” He said, “Why don't they get drunk on Saturday night and go to church on Sunday morning? You would think the two don't fit.” And he asked that because even a lost person could tell you that was wrong. Even a lost person could tell you that if someone died for you, you should show some respect, amen? You shouldn't act that way. You don't have to go to Sunday school to figure that out. And that's what Paul is saying here. Someone died for you. Jesus went to the cross for you. He was beaten and flogged and whipped for your sins, so throw the evil man out. Get rid of this for the sake of the church.

John MacArthur says, we should not be entertained by the sins that Jesus died for. We shouldn't be proud of them. We shouldn't go around saying, “Wow, hey, look at us. We're so open minded because of this sin.” As a church, you should not be known for your sin. J. C. Ryle said it this way. He said, “The heart that is really tasted of the grace of God will instinctively hate sin.”

And let me say this in a positive way. That's all negative, and that's important because this is what the passage is saying. But there's a positive way to say this: this is how you beat sin. This is how you defeat it, by looking to Jesus Christ. You don't defeat your sin by looking at your sin. That won't do you any good. Your sin is what got you in this mess in the first place. Your sin is what's getting you in trouble, and you don't do it by looking to yourself. Yourself is the problem too. You defeat sin by looking to Christ.

Again, I don't know what you've brought with you this morning. I don't know what you're dealing with, what you're struggling with. Lust, pride, anger, jealousy, greed, coveting, anxiety, depression – but whatever it is, you beat it by looking to Christ. You don't beat it by looking at

yourself. Look at yourself, it's like going down the rabbit hole, right? It's like looking at an abyss.

One old saint put it this way, he said, "Looking ain't lifting..." (He's a southerner. I'll translate that for you guys later.) "...Looking ain't lifting and it ain't doing a bunch of good works (a little southern accent there). You don't need strength to look and you don't need brains. You don't need a bunch of money to do it. You can be as poor as Job's turkey, all you need to do is look to Christ. Some of you are looking in the wrong direction this morning. That's why you're discouraged. You can't defeat your sin on your own, but He's already done that. You look to Him.

David Brainerd was a missionary to the Delaware Indians of New England in the 1700s. And he had quite a story because he slept in trees and he traveled through mountains and rivers to reach his people while he was dying of tuberculosis. He was coughing up blood. He actually died in his 20s. But he had quite an impact on these people. He led many of them to the Lord, and he described his methods this way. Here's what he did. It was very simple. He said,

I never got away from Christ and Him crucified. Christ is what I preached, Christ is what I taught them. And I found that when my people were gripped by Him, I had no need to give them long instructions about morality because the one followed inevitably right after the other. I found that my people began to put on the garments of holiness and righteousness and live a sanctified life, even in small manners when they were possessed by the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified.

Isn't that wonderful? He said, "Look, I went into these villages and these Indian people, they were a mess. They were a horrible mess. And I didn't fix it by talking about the mess. I fixed it by talking about Christ." Friends, I would say the same thing to you this morning. You don't need instructions on morality first. You don't need five ways to beat sin or six ways to beat temptation. I mean, all that's fine and helpful and good, but first and foremost, you need to look to Christ. Paul says, "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump just as in fact you are unleavened." "You are saved," he says. "Jesus died for you, but now you need to go and remember it. For Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed."

Which leads us to the next thing Paul says about the Passover Lamb. First, he gives us the reason for it. Jesus died for our sins. That's the reason. That's why He came. He died to defeat the evil things that we do and so, we should not go back to them now. If someone frees you from your chains, you don't go back to the chains. That's madness. If someone frees you from death, you don't go back to death. "Oh, I wish I was in the grave again." You don't do that.

Which brings us to the next thing he says here, the next point Paul makes about the Passover Lamb. And that is this: it was perfect. Not only does he give us the reason for the Passover Lamb, but next he gives us the quality of it, the type of lamb that it was, and he says it was perfect. Jesus gave us a perfect sacrifice for sin. He paid all of sins requirements. God didn't give us a shabby lamb. He didn't give us a frail one or a measly one. He gave us the best lamb that He had. Everything our sin required was met in Him.

And there are two ways this is expressed here, if you're taking notes. First, Paul tells us that the Passover is perfect because of who it was. It tells us the Passover was perfect because of who it was that was offered on the cross. He says in verse 7, he says, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." Paul says that our Passover Lamb was Christ. That's who it was.

And we read that word today and we don't think a whole lot about it. But the word Christ was not used a tremendous amount in the New Testament. It was used quite a bit. But oftentimes, the New Testament authors would leave it out for reverence. Here the word is *Christos*. In Greek it means "anointed one" or in Hebrew, the translation of the word is "Messiah". "For Messiah our Passover has been sacrificed."

Contrary to popular belief, Christ is not Jesus' last name, it is His title. If you went to Israel and you looked in the phone book, you would not see Christ between the B's and the D's. That's not the point here. His name was Jesus, son of Joseph. His title was Jesus the Christ. And it basically means He's the Saviour of Israel. He's the one who came to rescue people from sin. Which is interesting because most Jews would not have thought the Messiah would save His people like this. They wouldn't think He would die. The Messiah is supposed to be a conquering hero. He's supposed to be the one killing people, not the other way around.

But to explain this a little further and even to dive a little more into the Old Testament here...(If you were with us, the Good Friday service a couple of days ago, Pastor Mike Chalmers talked about this)...But the Passover was one of three annual feasts in Israel where every Jewish male was required to come to Jerusalem to make a sacrifice. There was Passover, there was feast of Pentecost, and there was Tabernacles. If you remember, Jesus was crucified and resurrected. And then about a month later, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. That was another feast in Israel. But at this one, at Passover, every Jewish male offered a lamb for his family in honour of the time that the Jews were told to put the blood of a lamb over the doorpost of their house in Egypt, so the angel of death would pass over them. If you remember your Old Testament history, when the Jews were slaves in Egypt, as the 10 plagues were drawing to a close, the Lord told every Jewish family to kill a lamb, eat it and put its blood over the door post, so when the angel of death saw the blood and saw the sacrifice, he wouldn't kill them, but he would go on to the Egyptians instead. And in a similar way, Paul says in an amazing way, that Jesus did that for us. He was our Passover Lamb. You could even say it this way, Paul says here, the Messiah was the Passover. You would take quite a bit of thinking to get that through. We have passages that talk about this: Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, that kind of thing. But most of the Jews thought the Messiah was going to come riding in on a white horse and just kill everybody. Paul says, the Messiah died, Christ died, so the angel of death would pass over us. Jesus was sinless, He never did anything wrong, which is why he could do this. He had no sin of His own to pay for. He had no debt of His own, and so He could pay for all of our debts on the cross.

Bringing us to a second way Paul tells us the Passover is perfect. First, he tells us who it was that died. Second, he tells us what the Passover did or what He did, and he finished sin once and for all. If you read, Paul says, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed." That word "sacrifice" is in the aorist tense in Greek. We don't really have this in English, but this is a tense which says it happened in the past and it's over now. It will never happen again. It was a onetime event. And Paul uses it here to say Jesus was sacrificed in the First Century and that's it. It's over.

He'll never die again. His sacrifice was so perfect, His death was so complete that it only had to be made once. According to some studies, there was something like 1 to 2 million Jews in Egypt during the Passover. And if you do the math on that, if they had to sacrifice one lamb per family (it's kind of a little hard to determine this), but it could be as many as 200,000 lambs in that first Passover. And if they had to do this every year for over a thousand years, how many lambs is that? Millions, billions? Lamb after lamb, after lamb, sacrifice after sacrifice, after sacrifice. And what Paul says here is that Jesus ended all of that. He put a stop to that because He was sacrificed. Aorist tense - killed in a single moment of time and it will never be repeated again. There is one lamb, one death, one sacrifice, and that's it. There are no more.

First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God," which means you don't need to go out and crucify yourself like the Filipino people do every Easter. You don't need to do that because Christ has been crucified. It's over. You don't need to celebrate Easter by flogging yourselves in the streets because Jesus has already been flogged. The sacrifice has been made. There's a reason you guys didn't bring a goat with you to worship today or a lamb to sacrifice, because you understand the lamb has been killed.

I've lost track of all the Christians I've met who forget this. Of all those who try to go out and punish themselves for their sins and pay God back ... you guys know what this is like, we all do this sometimes. We mess up, we do something wrong and what do we do? We say, "God, if you will just forgive me, I will never eat chocolate again after this Easter Bilby I put in my mouth." "If you get me through this, I will never curse or swear again. I'll never yell at the Canucks on TV again." Some of you are feeling guilty right now. Or they blow it, they make a mistake, and what do they do? They start bargaining with God, right? "You do your part God, I'll do my part." Paul says here, there is no bargain. The bargain's already been made. There is no this for that. There's no going back and forth. Your sins have already been paid for in Christ. Jesus took care of it all and you just need to believe that now.

The story is told of the time a Christian doctor was working in a mental hospital with a man who said he was Jesus. That was his disorder. He thought he was the Messiah. And so the doctor said, "Wait a minute and I'll come right back." And so he left and came back into the room with a hammer and some nails. The man said, "What are you doing with that?" And the doctor said, "Well, if you're Jesus, we need to do what you came here for, so let's get this over with, hold out your hands." The man said, "I'm not Jesus, not anymore." Friends, let's be honest this morning, some of you are trying to be Jesus right now. That's your disorder. You're trying to pay God back for your sins. You're trying to be good enough to please Him and strike a bargain and go this for that, and you need to stop. Jesus has already done that. The Messiah has already been sacrificed, and you need to trust in that now. He's the Messiah, not you. He's the Christ, He paid for sin, you didn't, and you need to be humble.

Let me say it this way, if you don't get this, if you don't believe He is the Messiah who died for our sins, then you will die for sins eternally in hell. He will pay for your sin now or you will pay for your sin forever. Those are the two options you have.

Martin Lloyd Jones was a famous preacher in London who had a great knack for explaining things like this. And in one of his sermons, he said this, he said,

I do not know you friends, not individually, but this is the wonderful thing about the work of a preacher. I don't have to know you personally because I know the most important thing about you, and that is that you are a sinner. I don't care who you are, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And I don't care what particular form your sin takes. There's a great deal of talk about that today, but I'm not interested in that. I don't need a catalog of your sins. They can be respectable, or they can be heinous. They can be nice sins and they can be bad ones. It doesn't matter. But what I have to tell you is this, though you may be the vilest man the world has ever known, and though you may have lived your life in a gutter, I say this to you, be it known unto you that through this man, the Lord Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins is available to you today. By Him all who believe, you included, are at this very moment justified entirely and completely from everything they have ever done. And if you believe that this is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He died on the cross for you and you rely upon Him, I tell you that in the name of God, all your sins are blotted out completely as if you had never seen in your life. And His righteousness has put on you and God sees you perfect in His son. That's the message of the cross, he says - that's the Gospel.

And it leads to one more point Paul makes about the Passover Lamb in this passage. Just to review these other ones, the first thing he says, is that there is a reason for the lamb. There's a reason Jesus came and died for sinners, and that was to clean out the old leaven that was inside of us, to take our sins away. And secondly, Paul says Jesus was perfect in doing so. He removed the sin completely. No matter how bad you are, no matter the evil things you have done, He took care of everything.

Which brings us to a third point Paul makes about the Passover Lamb, and this is our final one. It goes back to what we said earlier. And it's this, this should cause us to celebrate. There's a reason for the lamb. The lamb was perfect, and that should cause us to celebrate. You should rejoice in what the Lord has done for you. Your favourite expression should not be a frown. There's no reason for that. If your sins have been paid for, you should rejoice, amen? And this is a cause for jubilation. Paul says in verses 7 through 8, he says, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

This is another Old Testament reference that he makes here. But after celebrating the Passover each year, the Jews would celebrate a week long feast called "The Feast of Unleavened Bread". In which they would cease from their work and they would remove all the leaven from their homes. This is where the tradition of spring cleaning comes from. The Jews would clean out their homes and get all the leaven out. They were so serious, they would sweep the floors, search the cupboards, overturn the furniture to make sure they wouldn't even taste it by accident. The Jewish rabbis would have long discussions as to what happens if a mouse picked up a piece of leaven and drag it across the house. Crazy stuff. But Paul says, "We shouldn't keep the feast like that." He says, "Not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." In other words, we shouldn't celebrate it by sweeping

out our house, but by sweeping out our hearts. We shouldn't celebrate it by removing the old leaven, but by removing malice and wickedness, which are synonyms of evil. And replacing it with sincerity and truth, which is a synonym for just a genuine Christian life. It doesn't matter what you eat if your heart's not in it anyway. It matters what you believe.

And while Paul doesn't mention the word "resurrection" in this past cause, he doesn't call it out by name, there's a hint of it in here in the sense that this is where our joy ultimately comes from. He mentioned celebration. This is where our celebration ultimately occurs, and that Jesus rose again. Not only did He die like this, not only was His sacrifice complete and finished and perfect and done, but He came back from death to show us that we can too. He put the "good" in Good Friday, amen? He made it very good.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe that this morning? Do you believe He put the "good" in Good Friday? Do you believe He died and rose again? Do you believe He went to the other side of the grave and back for you? I hope you do because I'll be honest with you, you can't do it yourself. You haven't met anybody who's gone to the other side of the grave and back. You need to believe in Him.

Going back to the other point, do you believe the sacrifice was perfect and there's nothing more for you to pay? Do you believe he took care of everything and it's finished now? And does that give you a reason to celebrate?

One southern preacher said, "If you have no joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere." Christians should have joy. People should be able to read our celebration on our face. We should be happy people. It doesn't matter what life brings, we're just passing through, right? We're on a journey somewhere else.

The Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry said, "The whole Christian life should be a feast of unleavened bread. It should be a continual outpouring of joy because Jesus did all of this for us."

There's a term you hear a lot this time of year. I don't know if you've heard this before, but I want to mention this term to you – "CEO Christian." Have you guys ever heard that term before? CEO Christian, it means a Christmas and Easter only Christian. No? Okay. Alright. They only come for the holidays. They come to church now, but you don't see them again until December. Or they come in December, but you don't see them again until spring. The tragic thing about that is that that's not the way God intended the Christian life to be. That's not what He wants. And here's why: because if that's your Christian life, you miss out on all this. You miss out on the joy. You miss out on the continual celebration of what Christ has done. You don't need to be thinking about this once or twice a year. You need to be thinking about this all throughout the year, every day, because of what Christ has done. All your sins have been paid for. You can be forgiven and free if you just trust in Him, the Passover Lamb.

I mentioned some of the Easter traditions that people hold to earlier, but in my studies this week, I came across a funeral tradition from South Africa where the local witch doctor places a bone in the hand... (Our South African doctors are not witch doctors. Let me just qualify that before you guys get the wrong impression. Our people don't do this.)... But I came across a funeral tradition

from South Africa where the local witch doctor places a bone in the hand of the deceased to help him pass into to the afterlife, so he won't be alone. And I was reading that, I remember thinking, what's that going to do? He already has bones. As a matter of fact, that's all he has right now. All he has is bones, we can give him another one? No, you need a living person to help you at that point, amen? You need someone to meet you on the other side. The Bible says you have that in Christ. You have someone to meet you on the other side. You have someone who is alive because Jesus has risen and He's waiting on the other side to meet you if you would trust in Him. Would you do that today? Would you take our Lord's hand? He was crucified and He's resurrected sitting at the right hand of the Father and He's waiting on you to come to Him. Let me pray that you would now if you haven't already.

Father, thank you for the rich words we have in here from the apostle Paul. I preach a sermon like this and you think of all the things that could be said about Christ being our Passover Lamb. But Lord, we thank you for the simplicity of this. We thank you for the connection between the Testaments of what You did in Israel thousands of years ago, and then what You did in Your Son as well, and how He fulfilled all of that.

Lord, I pray that we would be a church that celebrates this this morning, not just today, but all throughout the year. Father, thank you for the cause of joy and celebration we have in Your Son. Lord, I pray if there's any here this morning who haven't trusted in Christ and Christianity is kind of a seasonal thing for them, I just pray, Lord, You would draw them to their need for this on a continual basis. Their need for a Saviour for all sin.

For those who have trusted in Christ, Lord, I just pray that they would be overjoyed as they remember what He has done for them. They would clean out the old leaven in their hearts, remove the malice and wickedness and put on sincerity and truth. Thank you, Lord, that all of this has been paid in Jesus. Thank you for the wonder of our salvation. And we pray all this in Christ's name, amen.